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THE

MASTER-WORKERS IN MOSAIC.

(Translated for THE CRAYON from the French of
Madame Dudevant.)

VIII.

Bozza was an artist not without merit. Much superior to the Bianchini, who were merely skillful and diligent workmen, he had obtained through the Zuccati the higher elements of drawing and color. His outlines were graceful and correct, his tints did not lack truth; and, in the rendering of the brilliancy and richness of stuffs, he perhaps surpassed Valerio himself. But if, through study and perseverance, he arrived at a successful embodiment of the material effects of Art, he was far from having caught that celestial fire which gives life to the productions of Art, and which constitutes the superiority of genius over talent. Bozza was too intelligent, and besides sought too anxiously to discover the secret of the superiority of others, not to be aware of his own deficiency, and not to labor earnestly to acquire it. But it was in vain that he tried to communicate to his figures the exquisite grace and sublime enthusiasm which animated those of the Zuccati. He could only succeed in representing physical emotions. In the scene from the Apocalypse, his figures of the demons and the damned were exceedingly well treated; but, although these were his special triumph, he had not succeeded in giving to these symbols of hate and grief that intellectual sentiment which ought always to characterize figures expressive of religious ideas. The condemned appear to be only tormented by the fierceness of the flames that consume them; no feeling of hate or despair is evident upon their countenances distorted by fury. The fallen angels retain no mark of their celestial origin; regret for their former grandeur was lost in a flightful irony; and in contemplating their repulsive features, those ferocious grins, those tortures, which remind us of an inquisition more than of the judgment of God, one experiences less emotion than astonishment, less of terror than of disgust.

Notwithstanding these defects, appreciable only by a sensitive organization, the work of Bozza possessed many excellent qualities, and the Zuccati thoroughly understood his powers in thus bestowing that which they confided to him. But in attempting nobler subjects he completely failed. His efforts at dignity of carriage were formal, his inspired faces snirked; his angels shook in vain their grand and splendid wings, their feet seemed firmly imbedded in the cement, and their eyes had no other brilliancy than that of the enamel and the marble.

The disappointed painters could no longer trace their thought in its execution, however faithful to their designs, and the Zuccati were compelled to touch in laboriously all that which constitutes in such faces the expression and sentiment of the moral life within. Since the completion of the scene from the Apocalypse, Bozza had been employed upon the grand festoon of the arch; and, as he felt it unworthy for him to be servilely copying ornaments, he suffered secretly all the tortures of mortified pride. It was, however, with gentleness, and with a truly delicate consideration, that the Zuc-

catti made him sensible of the necessity of giving sacred subjects to more skillful hands, and of completing the details of the dome until subjects better adapted to his special talent could be confided to their school. Bozza did not estimate truly the private lessons in drawing and painting given him by the Zuccati in their leisure hours. He could conceive of nothing more important in the world than the care for his future glory: he secretly censured Valerio for that disposition for amusement which prevented him from giving himself personally every hour of relaxation, and Francesco for his devotion to serious studies, which compelled him occasionally to curtail his lesson, or postpone it until the following day. He was convinced that these masters were fearful of being surpassed by him, and were depriving him of the means of rapid instruction, in order to take advantage of his labors for their own profit, as long as they could; he gave himself up accordingly to all the misery of suspicion and resentment.

At other times (and these instants were yet more cruel), he opened his eyes to conviction and perceived that notwithstanding the excellent lessons and disinterested advice they gave him, he did not progress as he should have done. He felt bitterly all the defects of his work, and asked himself fearfully, if beyond a certain reach of talent, he was not to be forever powerless. He was conscious what he lacked, and was unable to realize it; his hand seemed to translate in vulgar terms the poetic aspirations of his brain, and he was not far from believing in the jealous influence of infernal agencies upon his destiny. Valerio had often said to him—"Bartolomeo, the greatest obstacle to the development of thy faculties is the restlessness that consumes thee. Nothing beautiful or great can bloom without the vivifying spirit of a warm heart and a free mind. Both health of body and soul are necessary to produce a healthy work, and that which springs from a diseased brain is wanting in the conditions of life. If, instead of passing thy nights in dreaming of the advantages of reputation, thou wouldest repose quietly by the side of thy beloved; if, instead of shedding the wasting tears of *ennui*, thou wouldest weep on the tender and sympathetic bosom of a friend; if, finally, in those hours, when fatigue prevents you from further labor, and dims thy eye to the perception of tints, rather than to weary thy sight and exhaust thy energy, thou wouldest seek in the recreations of thy age, in the innocent passions of thy youth, the means of restoring the forces of the artist, by giving them, for a time, a new aliment, I believe that thou wouldest be surprised, on returning to thy work, at feeling thy heart beat so vigorously, and wouldst find thy whole being animated with an unknown joy and an all-conquering hope. But thou contrivest to be always sad—to be always sinking under the burden of existence. How canst thou hope to give to thy work that life which is not in thee? If this is kept up so, all the sources of thy genius will be exhausted before thou canst avail thyself of them. By looking constantly to the termination of thy work, and exaggerating the reward of victory, thou wilt wholly forget the sweet inspiration and the pure joys belonging to its pro-

duction. Art, in revenge for not being loved for its own sake, is only visible remotely to thy deceived and dazzled eyes; and if thou shouldst, by the accident of novelty, obtain the vain applause of the multitude, thou wouldest not feel in thyself that grateful satisfaction which the conscientious artist feels who regards with a smile the criticism of his ignorant judges, and who derives consolation even in misery, if he can shut himself up with his muse in a garret or a dungeon, and with her enjoy the intense delights unknown to vulgar minds."

The unhappy artist was well aware of the truth of these observations, but, instead of perceiving that Valerio uttered them in the simplicity of his soul, and with a sincere desire to set him in a proper direction, attributed to him the unholv sentiments of a secret joy and cruel contempt at the sight of his sufferings. Discouraged and hopeless, he would, on such occasions, cry out, "Yes, it is too true, Valerio! I am lost. I burn like a torch tormented by the wind, before having shown my light to the world. You know it well, and you place your finger on the wound. You are acquainted with the secret of your own strength, and that of my weakness. Triumph as you will, humiliate me, despise my dreams, defeat my hopes, make a jest of my desires. You have known how to direct your energies, you have guided the fiery steed, you have subdued him. Me! I urge him unceasingly, and carried away by him, I shall be dashed to pieces at the first obstacle."

It was in vain that the two Zuccati sought to quiet him, and inspire him with hope; he repelled their kindness, and, offended at their compassion, he would go and conceal his misery remote from every eye and every manifestation of sympathy.

Seeing that their friendly counsels served only to irritate the suffering temper of this bruised spirit, the two young masters gradually desisted from speaking with him about himself; Bozza concluded, therefore, they loved him no more, and that they were afraid of his profiting too advantageously by their advice. The unfortunate necessity of giving up a noble and interesting work, in order to finish unattractive ornaments by the expiration of a given period, had brought to a climax his embittered feelings. He formed a resolution at once, to leave them on the termination of his engagement; for he did not build upon the hope that they would propose him for a mastership, as they had the right to do by the terms of their contract with the procurators. This right was extended only to one pupil a year, and Ceccati and Marini, his young associates, seemed to him much higher than himself in the Zuccati's affections. He intended to go either to Ferrara or Bologna, arrange to become a master, and to form a school there; for, if he was one of the least at Venice, he might hope to become one of the first in a less rich and less illustrious city. His quarrel with Valerio, possessed, in his eyes, the double advantage of restoring him to freedom, and furnishing him with an opportunity to avenge himself. The works were not completed: Saint Mark's Day approached, the moments were counted. In both schools, increased efforts were made so as not to be behind hand in their contracts.

The absence or departure of an apprentice then, was at this time a decided check, and would seriously compromise the result of the extraordinary efforts hitherto made, in order that either should not be surpassed by the rival school.

IX.

The Bianchini were not long in perceiving the absence of Bozza, and the depressed condition of Valerio. Vincent related his artifice of the evening before to his two brothers, with a brutal laugh, and all three, encouraged by this first success, determined to spare no effort that would hinder the progress of the works in the great cupola, and thereby ruin the Zuccati. After holding a consultation in the cabaret, Vincent went in pursuit of Bozza, and discovered him, just at nightfall, in the large groves extending along the lagunes in the suburb of the Santa Chiara. Bozza was strolling slowly by the side of a green hedge, intermingled with beautiful fruit-trees, whose branches drooped caressingly above the peaceful waters. A profound silence reigned within this leafy city, and the last ruddy gleams of the setting sun were fading away slowly in the distance upon the rustic belfry of the Island of Certosa. In this view, Venice presented a physiognomy as *naïve* and pastoral as, in other situations, it was coquettish, proud, or terrible; no boat drew near the bank, but those laden with herbs and fruits; no noise is heard but that of the rake in the alleys, or the buzz of spinning-wheels, twirled by women in the midst of their children, seated on the sills of the conservatories; the convent-clocks gave forth the hours with a clear, almost woman-like tone, with nothing to interrupt their long and melancholy vibration. There, in other days, he that sung Childe Harold came frequently to seek the import of certain secrets of Nature—grace, sweetness, charm, repose—mysterious words that Nature, powerless or pitiless to him, sent back translated into languor, melancholy, ennui, despair. There, Bozza, insensible to the benign influences of a delicious evening, was absorbed in the rapid flight and desperate combats of the sea-birds, who, in the twilight hour, contended for their last prey, or hastened to reach their secret haunts. These spectacles of strife and disquiet were the only ones that could attract his sympathy. Everywhere the vanquished seemed to him to represent his rivals, and when the conqueror screamed forth his cries of rage and triumph, Bozza imagined himself borne away upon his extended wings towards the realization of his insatiable desires.

Bianchini accosted him with an air of frankness, and, after having told him that he had for a long time noticed the evil intentions of the Zuccati towards him, begged to be informed, even under the seal of secrecy, if he had positively resolved to quit their school.

"There is no secrecy in the matter," replied Bartolomeo, "for it is not only a thing resolved on, but a thing done."

Bianchini expressed his pleasure with some reserve, assuring Bozza that he might have remained ten years with the Zuccati without the least chance of a mastership—and, for example, cited the case of Marini, who was a young fellow of talent, and who

had worked for them six years, with no other recompense but that of a moderate salary and the title of companion. "Marini flatters himself," he added, "with the thought of becoming a master next St. Mark's Day, from a promise of Messer Francesco Zuccato, but—"

"He promised? positively?" said Bozza, with sparkling eyes.

"In my presence," replied Vincent. "Perhaps, he has made the same promise to you! Ah! promises cost the Zuccati nothing; they treat the apprentices as they treat the procurators, with more words than deeds. They have fine speeches always ready, to explain to their dupes how Art demands a long novitiate—that an artist dies before his time, in abandoning himself too soon to the caprices of his imagination; that the greatest geniuses have been wrecked by freeing themselves too fast from the servile study of models, &c. What do they not say! They have learned by heart, in their father's studio (when their father had a studio), five or six big words uttered by Titian or Giorgione, and now, they believe themselves masters of painting, and talk like oracles. Really, it is so ridiculous, I cannot imagine how it is that your great Devil in the Apocalypse—a person so perfect, so comically treated, so capitally horned, and so humorous, that I can never regard it without laughing—does not detach himself from the wall, descend upon them with his lion's tail, and box their ears, when they give forth thoughts so ridiculous and misplaced as these are in their mouths."

Although Bozza was mortified at the vulgar praise bestowed upon his chief production, a figure he had designed to appear as terrible, and not grotesque, he still felt secret gratification in hearing the Zuccati ridiculed and depreciated. When Bianchini thought he had won his confidence by caressing his vanity, he offered to receive him into his own school, promising a salary much larger than that he obtained from the Zuccati; but he was surprised to have a refusal for the only reply, and not to detect the slightest satisfaction upon the countenance of Bozza. He thought the young apprentice holding back for a better bargain, in order to secure greater pecuniary advantages. The Bianchini could not conceive, in the life of an artist, of any other aim, any other hope, any other aspiration than—money.

After having vainly tried to tempt him with yet more brilliant offers, Vincent abandoned the idea of engaging him, and, assuming the calm air of a wholly disinterested person, he sought, by flattery and familiar conversation, to penetrate the cause of his refusal and the hidden motive of his ambition. This was not a difficult matter. Bozza, a man so distrustful and reserved that the sincerest friendship could not draw forth a confession of weakness, yielded to him, like a child to the seductions of the grossest flattery; praise was to his lungs the atmosphere of life, and deprived of it, he had either to suffer or to die. When Bianchini saw that his one single purpose was to become a master, and enjoy the vainglorious adjuncts of such a position—the authority, the independence, the title, even if he derived no advantage from his labor, and a further long continuance of suffering—he conceived a profound

contempt for that ambition, less vile than his own, and would have turned it into open ridicule, if he had not been aware that he could still employ it to the disadvantage of the Zuccati.

"Ah, my young master," he said to him, "you desire to command, and serve no longer! That is quite natural; I can imagine it well, in the heart of a man of talent like yourself. Well! you are right; you must become a master; but not in a miserable provincial town where you will sweat night and day for twenty years, without being heard of. It is necessary to become master here in Venice—at Saint Mark's—so as to supplant as well as replace the Zuccati."

"That's easier said than done," replied Bozza; "the Zuccati are all-powerful."

"Perhaps not so much so as you fancy," replied Bianchini. "Will you engage upon your honor to trust yourself to me, and aid me in all my designs? I will guarantee my word that before the end of six months, the Zuccati shall be chased out of Venice, and both of us—you and I—reign absolute masters in the Basilica."

Vincent spoke so confidently, and he was known for such a persevering man, so skillful and successful in all his schemes; he had escaped so many perils, and repaired so many disasters when another would have wrecked entirely, that Bozza, excited, felt a thrill of pleasure in his veins, and the perspiration oozed from his forehead as if the sun had risen from the sea, in which it had just descended, and shed upon him the hottest rays of its life-giving power. Bianchini, seeing him conquered, took his arm and led him away.

"Come," said he; "I desire you to see, with your own eyes, an infallible means for ruining our enemies. But, in the first place, promise under oath not to give way to any whim excited by foolish sensibility, and not to counteract my projects. Your testimony is absolutely necessary to me. Are you certain not to recoil from any of the consequences of the truth, however painful they may be to your former masters?"

"And where are these consequences to stop," asked Bozza, astonished.

"With life only," replied Bianchini. "They will involve banishment, dishonor—misery."

"I will not lend myself to such proceedings," said Bozza, coldly, moving away from the tempter. "The Zuccati are honest people after all, and I am unable to push dislike into hatred. Leave me alone, Messer Vincent, you are a bad man."

"It appears to you so," replied Vincent, manifesting no sensitiveness at a qualification which for a long time he had ceased to blush at. "This frightens you, because you believe in the power of the brothers Zuccati. It is very praiseworthy conduct on your part. But if one could prove to you, and that by your own eyesight, that these people are men of no integrity, who cheat the Republic and abuse its bounty by stealing their salaries and procrastinating their work; if I can make you see this, what will you say? And if, after having seen it, I summon you to give evidence to the truth, what would you do?"

"If I saw it with my own eyes, I would say the Zuccati are the greatest hypocrites and the meanest liars I ever encountered;

and if, in such an event, I am summoned to give testimony, I would do so, because they would have duped me outrageously, and because I hate men who assume to tread upon others, too heartily not to abhor those who arrogate this privilege at the expense of a lie. They, robbers and liars! I will not believe it; but I wish it might be so, were it only for the pleasure of declaring it to their faces—No! you have not the right to despise me!"

"Follow me," said Bianchini, with a malignant smile; "the night is dark, and were it otherwise, we can penetrate into the basilica without exciting the suspicions of any one. Come, and if you do not lack courage, before six months are over, you shall display upon the highest part of the basilica ceiling, a great yellow devil, that shall grin more savagely than all the rest, and which shall be worth to you a hundred golden ducats."

Thus speaking, he glided away under the sweet-scented trees; and Bozza followed, trembling, feeling as he trod upon the borders of thyme and fennel, as if about to commit some heinous crime.

ALLEGORY IN ART.*

THE effectiveness and permanent value of any work of Art must depend mainly on its adherence to the particular function of the class of Art to which it belongs, and the consequent expression of the truths, to express which is the peculiar province of that class. Especially in serious Art is it demanded that a work shall maintain dignity by standing on that ground where it is strongest, and where the inherent deficiencies of the technique shall be less forcibly brought into view, at the same time that the thought and feeling of the artist shall be shown to be devoted to that which is the legitimate object of his devotion. It was a saying of our William Page, one of the most profound thinkers on Art of modern times, that every man had an idiosyncrasy, which, if fully developed, would make him the greatest man of his time, and we see the truth of this constantly exemplified in Art, by the brilliant success of men who, without great comprehensive talent, have found that there was one thing which they could do well, and have had the common sense to attempt nothing else, so that in the excellence of the thing they did, men forgot what they did not, and so they stood alone in the provinces they had selected. There is an extension of this law also in an application to the diverse forms of Art, by which we declare that every branch of it has a range of ideas, in which it shall so fully express itself, that we shall neither feel its deficiencies in other respects, nor compare it with other branches in regard to excellence; and thus every artist should remember at once his individual limitation and that of his peculiar Art; and so his works will, diverse as may be their excellences, stand distinguished by some one supreme quality rising above all the others, and stamping them with an individuality of perception, and a singleness of aim, which will make men forget, while they see them, that Art has

any other aim or purpose than that which they show. The man who has not done something better than any one else did it before him, has lived and left the world no better for his existence.

Thus also of the diverse fields of Art; if we find not in each some fair flower or glorious fruit, a stranger to all other fields, we know that its cultivators have been idle and unintelligent, and to find for each different manifestation of the Art-spirit its fittest forms of expression, is the first great function of Genius; and though we may often admire the embodiment of the ideas of one Art in the language of another, and the playful usurpation by one sister of the province of another, it is rather because we are surprised at the versatility of the artist than enraptured at the beauty or dignity of the work. We do not consider here that work which genius sometimes does as its play, the relief which it finds in occupying talents generally unused, as when—

"He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient, proudly
Cramps his spirit, crowds his all in little,
Makes a strange Art of an Art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowrets;"

but that which, with the implements of one Art attempts to perform the offices of another. This, it seems to us, is the case in allegoric Art, where it is attempted "to point a moral or adorn a tale" by painting, and we should characterize such an attempt as a departure from the position in which Art is strongest, because at home, to assume that of a teacher in a sphere where words can act far more economically and effectively. It may be productive of partial good—it may even repay the labor and time bestowed on it—but, we doubt if the very success attained be not productive of a greater, if more remote, evil, by obscuring the true standard of Art, and making us forget what its proper functions are. We are well aware that great masters in Art have acted from a feeling differing from this—that Veronese painted grand allegories, and that Hogarth told stories of force and keen moral point; but, since Veronese was a philosopher and Hogarth a moralist, beside both being artists, it does not follow that their rank or power as artists depended in any way on their philosophical or moral tendencies, or that the allegory or the story should be considered as a part of their Art. The office of painting is with the visible world, or the ideal, in some kind; and, although it may have a certain value as a means of expressing ideas of great moral or theological importance, it seems clear to us that there is a degradation of the Art involved in making it the servant either of ethics or theology, because it stands, by right, sovereign in its own sphere. Not to enter at this time into consideration of the Art of illustration, which shall claim our notice at another time, we wish to examine the relations of pure allegory to painting. The allegorist conceives certain general truths, which he undertakes to express figuratively by particular circumstances or facts, producing a continued metaphor—a poem, in brief, of greater or less excellence, according to its grandeur, the significance of its imagery, and, in general, to those qualities which distinguish poetry, and the rank which we give its author de-

pends entirely on his possession of those gifts which mark the poet. If, then, in the embodiment of this allegory, he employ the language of painting, we must judge the work, primarily, as to its conception solely, and if, by any use of visible forms, he shall have succeeded in conveying the truths which he intended to express, he has accomplished his purpose, and his allegory stands complete, though his forms were as rude and unartistic as the hieroglyphics of Egypt. When he enters the lists as an artist, he has another ordeal to pass, and his work then becomes the subject for criticism as a work of Art. The judgments are distinct, as the truths sought to be conveyed are distinct; in one case we have a symbolic expression of abstract truths—in the other, a simple and loving representation of the beauty of Nature, the positive and definable forms of which sense takes cognizance—combine the ends as we may, we have still a work subject to two diverse examinations; and, be the allegory ever so grand, it may still consist with poverty in the Art, while the most insignificant of metaphors may be conveyed in the most exquisite representations of natural truth.

But, let the powers of the Allegorist be what they may, the position of the Artist must always be determined by his perception and rendering of the pure truth of Art, and his reading of those messages which, given to the artist, are denied to all other men, save as they are accepted from him. And there is a double danger in this mingling of the two elements of thought, the one, that of making Art secondary in the public estimation to the subject of allegory, and the other, that of leading the artist himself to forget, in his keen following out of some poetical idea, that his business is to see and to interpret what he sees—to represent the Beautiful in the light in which it appears to him, rather than to teach lessons of poetical or practical morality.

Cole, in his "*Voyage of Life*," has grounded on both rock and quicksand, and the success of his allegories, generally, has been as injurious to the ideal of Art, as instrumental to his own success in life. The popularity of those semi-religious stories he told on canvas, was not based at all on his Art, but on his morality or his theology—a significant token of his weakness as a painter. He who places his Art in the service of anything less than the glory of God, only proves that he lacks reverence for, and devotion to, it. The only religious office of Art is in the spiritualizing and beatifying power of Beauty; and, if a painter has bound himself to the service of dogmas and beliefs, he has given his labor to what the next generation may prove to be an error, or a delusion, and thus the work is condemned, unless its Art shall be true and pure, and so preserve it by its possession of universal worth, and qualities which all ages shall recognize as glorious and desirable; and this should always be the aim of the artist, to attain excellences which shall endure and retain their hold on the minds of men to all time. These can only be found in the expression of attributes which are eternal, of truths supreme and divine. But, Cole's allegory was his own partial, feeble thought—his philosophy of life, a philosophy, to our mind, devoid of dignity or thoughtfulness, and erroneous in its practical conclusions. Be that as it

* *The Voyage of Life*. A series of four allegorical paintings, by THOMAS COLE. Engraved by James Smillie, and published by Rev. Gorham D. Abbot, Spangler Institute, New York.